McGordon E-4, 9 (no date) 1907 ART Khasi ART

and other trees. These are the sacred groves. Here the villagers worship U ryngkew U hom, the tutelary deity of the village. These groves are taboo, and it is an offence to cut trees therein for any purpose other than for performing funeral obsequies. The groves are generally not more than a few hundred yards away from the villages. The villages of the Syntengs are similar in character to those of the Khasis. The War villages nestle on the hill-sides of the southern border, and are to be seen peeping out from the green foliage with which the southern slopes are clad. In the vicinity of, and actually up to the houses, in the War villages, are to be observed large groves of areca-nut, often twined with the *pan* creeper, and of plantain trees, which much enhance the beauty of the scene. Looking at a War village from a distance, a darker shade of green is seen; this denotes the limits of the extensive groves where the justly celebrated Khasi orange is grown, which is the source of so much profit to these people. The houses in the War villages are generally closer together than those of the Khasis, probably owing to space being limited, and to the villages being located on the slopes of hills. Generally up the narrow village street, and from house to house, there are rough steep stone steps, the upper portion of a village being frequently situated at as high an elevation as 200 to 300 ft. above the lower. In a convenient spot in a War village a clear space is to be seen neatly swept and kept free from weeds, and surrounded with a stone wall, where the village tribunals sit, and the elders meet in solemn conclave. Dances also are held here on festive occasions. At Nongjri village there is a fine rubber tree, under whose hollow trunk there are certain sacred stones where the priest performs the village ceremonies.

The Bhoi and Lyngngam villages are built in small clearings in the forest, the houses are close together and are built often in parallel lines, a fairly broad space being reserved between the lines of houses to serve as a street. One misses the pretty gardens of the War villages, for Bhois and Lyngngams attempt nothing of the sort, probably because, unlike the Khasi, a Bhoi or Lyngngam village never remains more than two or three years in one spot; generally the villages of these people are in the vicinity of the forest clearings, sometimes actually in the midst

so take such a clan mother with the name Ka Sing Lan. She has two sons and five daughters, and in addition two brothers and two sisters who are all married. Also each of the five daughters and two sisters has four children. These forty-six people live with the clan mother and form the family clan of the Lan. To these we also add the sons and brothers, the nephews and grandsons, but not their children. The latter have nothing to do with the family Lan but belong to the family clan of their wives, live with that clan and are counted in it. Likewise neither the husband of Ka Sing Lan, nor the husbands of the various daughters, sisters, nieces, and granddaughters belong here. They are all counted with their own clans, live and work with them according to Khasi customs, and only visit their wives occasionally perhaps after dark.

The entire clan-family of Lan is housed in 3 or 4 huts, which all stand next to each other in a semicircle or are built one above the other on the slope of a hill, according to the character of the land. A garden frequently surrounds them in which maize, sweet potatoes, potato-like roots of kidi-ot and kolaw, bananas and, on the southern slopes of the Khasi Mountains, also coffee, pineapples, and other fruits are cultivated. A circle of bamboo cane that is so important for building purposes, household objects, and /136/ implements surrounds the garden and huts. This bamboo cane grows up so thick as an arm to a height of 30 or 35 metres and at the same time forms a good protection against bad weather. A wall (mawsha) of thrown-up earth encloses everything, forming an enclosed farm, prevents unimpeded access, and protects cattle and crops from the attacks and devastations of wild animals.

What is considered the family property of such a clan? Primarily it is the land, the gardens, the rice fields, woods, fallow mountain and grazing lands. On the southern slopes of the Khasi Mountains there are fields for the cultivation of rape, orange groves, laurel groves, plantations of betel palms and of pepper leaves which far and wide are so highly treasured for betel chewing as a source of pleasure. (2)

2). Cf. Becker, Im Stromtal des Brahmaputra, /In the River Valley of the Brahmaputra/ (Munich, 1913), pp. 207 ff.

Usually there is so much land available that the family-clan can nourish itself properly and also increase in number.

According to its size and wealth a family clan also owns a corresponding number of cows, oxen, hens, pigs, and goats. Neither the milk nor the flesh of the cows is used. They are kept for the

but for themselves. In all these cases the youngest daughter 342.
of the family who is known as the Ka Khadduh of the family must live in the old house and maintain the social and religious traditions of the family. In the village of Mawphlang we found that the houses of all the Ka Khadduhs like Ka Sadia, Ka Thaniau and others, and also the old house of the wife of U. Sukawai, the myntri of the Mawphlang State, all belong to this "U"-shaped type. This association of Ka Khadduhs and "U" shaped huts suggests that this is the old type. The modern huts vary in their structure some being like modern bungalows common now-a-days in Shillong.

The old Khasi house, in general, can be described as follows :—

[343] [26] Generally there is a compound in front and a pigsty at one side, the whole site being enclosed by a fencing of reed and small plants or of wooden planks or some such material. The hut as observed from outside is elliptical in front and box-shaped behind (as seen in the diagram). It is "U"-shaped in the ground plan. The roof of the hut is sloped on the two sides and spread out like a fan, in a semi-circle, in front.

343 342. The material used in the construction of the hut varies. In some of the old houses the walls were found to be made of blocks of stone with mud in the interstices serving the purpose of mortar. The roof had a bamboo frame covered with thatching grass. In other old huts the walls were not entirely made of stone blocks. In some we found the front portion made entirely of stone, the lower portions of the side and of the rear walls, up to a level of two to three feet, made of stone, the remaining portions being made of wooden planks or reeds covered with mud. In some modified huts again (either they were built later or the old huts were repaired) the entire rear wall except at the base and the upper portions of the sides were made of tinplates from used cans nailed to a frame. In some huts corrugated and galvanized iron sheets have been used. The material for the roof

[P. 107 B]

potable water supply. Villages are about two to five miles apart and have no boundary markers. In the past villages contained ceremonial buildings and grounds, the house of the village priest (also the home of a chief if he resided in that village), the village marketplace, and two graves, cremation grounds, or other ceremonial spots that were believed to be inhabited by supernatural beings. Villages today may have also one or more Christian churches, government social welfare buildings, and schools. Formerly, villages were entered through a guarded gateway; this is no longer the case, and paths lead into villages from all directions. Often several villages are incorporated into one large unit, named and also described as a "village." These were once defense units but were so cumbersome otherwise that institutions developed strongly among the components villages. Now they have been integrated through the agency of all-village public services, especially schools. Housing. The traditional Khasi house is entered through a door at the rounded end of a U-shaped ground plan, and a place 20 feet or wider inside it is about 30 feet deep, and a ridgepole or beam is visible. Its walls are of stone blocks or mortared with mud. The roof of grass thatch, supported by a bamboo frame, overhangs the walls on three outside down to about three feet above the ground. The house is divided into two parts: the front one-third is on the ground level, floored either with stone blocks or tamped earth, and is used for storage of occupational instruments and as a shelter for poultry. The rear two-thirds is raised four feet on piles of stone blocks to a platform of planks, and is partitioned into six rooms, comprising a kitchen, area for storage of food and water, and sleeping quarters. Furniture is minimal, and the house is totally unheated. There are no windows, and no smoke vents. A house generally has a compressed shed, walled of wood and grass matting and thatched with grass. This serves as a pigsty, but it may be partitioned also to house cows, and it may have a loft for fuel storage. Compounds often contain garden plots, and are fenced around with stone or bamboo and mud. Nowadays, the traditional house has given way to Western-style bungalows of wood and tin, especially in and around Shillong. (Cf. Middleton et al. 1961.)

ECONOMY. The Khasi economy is a market economy based on agriculture, and most Khasis are primary producers, sellers, middlemen, and/or providers of services in connection with markets. Khasis are often multioccupational; they produce goods for partial subsistence, and also play some part in trade. Agriculture. On the Shillong plateau, the major field crops are potatoes, maize, millets, and dry rice, still produced mostly through swidden farming, with a two- to three-year period of fallow, but increasingly through continuous use of a single field with the aid of ma-